



News Release

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Early Childhood Development Program Makes a Difference in Lives of Migrant Farm Worker Children

*New Report Shows Farm Worker Families Reap Benefits of
First 5 California Funding*

SACRAMENTO— A new report released today by First 5 California revealed that 95 percent of children who participated in its Children of Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Project showed significant improvement in their developmental skills. The program, an enhancement of the California Migrant Education Even Start (MEES) project, serves migrant families and provides early childhood development and kindergarten readiness skills for children under age 5.

The new study conducted by researchers at Sims & Associates Educational Services sheds light on the achievements of the First 5 California Children of Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Project.

“Language barriers and constant mobility make learning difficult for the children of farm workers,” said First 5 California Executive Director Kris Perry. “These challenges cause severe gaps in school attendance and learning. Reaching farm worker parents and their children requires non-traditional approaches, including home visitations. Our program has shown dramatic success in providing children of farm workers with the tools they need to enter school healthy and ready to learn.”

Among the report findings is that MEES First 5 children improved significantly from pretest to post-test on the Brigance Developmental Screens. This brief inventory assesses early childhood general knowledge and comprehension, speech and language, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, and counting by rote.

At pretest, three in four of the study children (76 percent) scored at or below the cutoff score used by the Brigance Developmental Screens to identify children “at-risk of developmental or academic delays.” On the post-test, 205 of the children with at-risk pretest scores raised their post-test scores above that cutoff, dropping the percentage of all at-risk scores to 46 percent.

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Of the 684 children studied, 95.2 percent scored higher at post-test than at pretest. Three-year-old children outscored their non-served age peers an average Brigrance score of 83.9 to 65.7, 4-year-olds 80.5 to 67.6, and 5 year-olds 83.6 to 68.7.

The evaluation report also showed that home and center-based served children improved significantly, with a 24.1 point improvement and 19.2 respectively.

The report included major accomplishments such as increasing enrollment of children and parents to 7,224, establishing 99 new project sites and expanding transportation services in isolated rural areas.

To qualify for the MEES program, a migrant family must have moved within the past three years across state or school districts to obtain temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural, fishing or food processing activity. In addition, families must have one or more children under the age of eight and one or more members of the household must begin working on adult education skills.

The full evaluation report can be accessed online by visiting www.first5california.com

About First 5 California

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, First 5 California, also known as the California Children and Families Commission, was established after voters passed Proposition 10 in November 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to fund education, health, child care and other programs for expectant parents and children up to age 5. For more information on First 5 California, visit www.first5california.com.

About Sims & Associates Educational Services

Sims Associates is a team of seasoned professionals experienced in teaching and administration from preschool through graduate school, with widely diverse populations from English learners to special education to gifted, in low-income and other areas. Dr. Angela Garcia-Sims founded the team in 1996 after heading departments of curriculum, research, and evaluation at the district, university, and regional level.

About Migrant Education Even Start

The Migrant Education Office of California Department of Education (CDE) funds regions across the state to provide a variety of services to migrant children and their families. In 1991 the Migrant Education Office began the Migrant Education Even Start Program (MEES), managed through the Butte County Office of Education.

The MEES Program provides early childhood development and kindergarten readiness skills to their children (birth to seven years of age) and classes on literacy, parenting and English as a Second Language to migratory parents. The California MEES Project coordinates with local school districts, adult education programs, community colleges and other agencies to provide services to migrant families.